

Pittsburg State University
Chamber Orchestra
presents

A Concert of Twentieth-Century Music

Featuring works by

m a j m a j m a j m a j
j m a **J** m a j m a j m a
a **G** **R** **A** **N** **T** a j m a j m
m a j **M** a j m a **J** m a j
j m a **E** m a j m **A** j m a
a j m **S** j m **R** **O** **M** **I** **G** m
m a j m a j m a **E** m a j
j m a j m a j m **S** j m a
a j m a **B** m a j m a j m
m a j m **E** j m a j m a j
j m a j **N** a j m a j m a
a j m a **J** m a j m a j m
m a j m **A** j m a j m a j
j m a j **M** a j m a j m a
a j **B** **R** **I** **T** **T** **E** **N** a j m
m a j m **N** j m a j m a j
j m a j m a j m a j m a



Monday, March 5, 2001
7:30 pm
McCray Recital Hall

PROGRAM

Simple Symphony

I. Boisterous Bourrée

Benjamin Britten
(1913-1976)

Six Pieces (1996)

- I.
- II.
- III.
- IV.
- V.
- VI.

James Romig
(b. 1971)

Simple Symphony

II. Playful Pizzicato

III. Sentimental Saraband

Lament

James Grant
(b. 1954)

Simple Symphony

IV. Frolicsome Finale

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Pittsburg State University Chamber Orchestra

Founded in 2000, the PSU Chamber Orchestra - an ensemble of students, faculty, and community players - provides opportunities to explore the wealth of literature for this performance medium. Players are afforded an opportunity to develop chamber music performance skills as soloists and ensemble players.

Violin I

Xiaoguo Zhu
Ni Mei
Linda Vollen
Marilyn Layden

Violin II

Bing Xu
Angela Lee
Carrie House

Viola

Paul Carlson
Gene Vollen

Cello

Martha Baxter
David Edson
Paul Smith

Bass

Richard Samford

Stella Hastings, Director

Please join us for a reception hosted by SAI members immediately following the program

PROGRAM NOTES

Benjamin Britten studied with Frank Bridge as a boy and in 1930 entered the Royal Conservatory of Music. In 1934 he heard Wozzeck and planned to study with Berg, but opposition at home stopped him. The next year he began working for the GPO Film Unit, where one of his collaborators was Auden: together they worked on concert works as well, Auden's social criticism being matched by a sharply satirical and virtuoso musical style. Stravinsky and Mahler were important influences, but Britten's effortless technique gave his early music a high personal definition, notably shown in orchestral works and songs. In 1939 he left England for the USA, with his lifelong companion Peter Pears; there he wrote his first opera. In 1942 he returned and, partly stimulated by Purcell, began to concentrate on settings of English verse (anthem *Rejoice in the Lamb* and *Serenade for tenor, horn and strings*, both 1943). His *String Quartet no.2* (1945), with its huge concluding chaconne, also came out of his Purcellian interests, but the major work of this period was *Peter Grimes* (1945), which signalled a new beginning in English opera. Britten was appointed a Companion of Honour in 1952, to the Order of Merit in 1965, and was awarded a life peerage in 1976.

This 'Simple Symphony' is entirely based on material from works which the composer wrote between the ages of nine and twelve. Although the development of these themes is in many places quite new, there are large stretches of the work which are taken bodily from the early pieces – save for the re-scoring for strings. (*Notes by the composer*)

James Romig (b. 1971) has had compositions performed throughout the United States and Europe in recitals, music festivals, and as accompaniment to dance. In the tradition of his musical mentors, Charles Wuorinen and Milton Babbitt, his music celebrates formal integrity, balance, and virtuosity. His compositions – for large ensembles, chamber groups, and soloists – include commissions from the Manhattan Chamber orchestra, the Interlochen Arts Academy, the Percussive Arts Society, Suono Mobile, and many others. His works are available from Parallax Music Press, Penn Oak Press, and the American Music Center.

Romig holds a Ph.D. in music theory and composition from Rutgers University, and undergraduate and masters degrees from the university of Iowa. He is currently on faculty at Pittsburg State University and also serves as music director and principal conductor of The Society for Chromatic Art, a contemporary-music ensemble based in New York City.

Six Pieces, for string orchestra, was commissioned in 1996 for the concert orchestra at the Interlochen Arts Camp in Michigan. The work is constructed on the principle of serialism, a system in which strictly ordered series (or "sets," or "rows") of pitches are used in various combinations to make up the structure of a composition. This "order-based" approach is quite different from functionally tonal music, in which coherence is based on unordered collections of pitches (major and minor scales, for example). Every melodic line heard in the piece is either a segment or a complete statement of one of four related pitch rows. The six short movements that make up this work explore different methods of articulating the rows: sometimes rows interact with each other as counterpoint, other times the pitches of the row jump from instrument to instrument. Rows can be heard forward, backward, and even upside down. Additional variation is achieved by more traditional means—changes in dynamic (volume), changes in tempo (speed), and coloristic instrumental effects like pizzicato (plucking), tremolo (rapid back-and-forth movement of the bow), and harmonics (ghost-like high pitches). (*Notes by the composer*)

For over twenty years, **James Grant** (b. 1954) has been commissioned by individuals, choruses, chamber groups and orchestras. His works have been performed in the United States, Australia, Brazil, Mexico, Canada, the Czech Republic, England, Japan, and New Zealand. As a composer of choral music, he has taken First Prize honors in three international competitions; and his orchestral overture **CHART** won first prize in the 1998 Indiana State University / Louisville Orchestra competition for new orchestral music.

After completing the DMA degree in composition from Cornell University, Grant was Assistant Professor of Music at Middlebury College in Vermont between 1988-1992, where he taught composition, coordinated an American Music Week Festival each year, and directed the New Music From Middlebury concert series. In 1992, Grant left academe to compose and lecture full-time and from 1993-96 served as Composer-In-Residence to the Fairfax Symphony Orchestra in Fairfax, Virginia. From 1996-98, he served as Composer-In-Residence to the Institute for the Environment Through the Arts, a nonprofit organization that brings together presenters, funding sources, artists of all disciplines, and environmental leaders to promote environmental awareness in communities through artistic expression. Presently, Grant is serving three years as Composer-In-Residence to the Bay-Atlantic Symphony in Bridgeton, New Jersey. Recognized by Cornell University's Graduate School of Humanities and Arts and by the Vermont chapter of the National Music Teachers Association for exceptional contributions as an educator, Grant continues to be active as a lecturer and private teacher of composition.

Grant's colorful musical language is known by musicians and audiences for its honed craft and immediacy. His ability to compose music appropriate to specific levels of experience has found him working with groups ranging from beginning youth orchestras, to community choruses, to professional contemporary chamber ensembles, ballet companies and orchestras.

In recent seasons, Grant's orchestral music has been featured on programs by the Louisville Orchestra, Minneapolis Pops Orchestra, Muncie Symphony Orchestra, Fairfax Symphony Orchestra, Central Florida Symphony Orchestra, Bay-Atlantic Symphony, San Jose Chamber Orchestra, Kansas City Chamber Orchestra, Hopkins Symphony Orchestra, Missouri Chamber Orchestra, Lawrence Chamber Orchestra, and a number of youth orchestras, including the Vermont Youth Orchestra and the Etowah Youth Symphony Orchestra. In the spring of 2000, two works were premiered at the International Tuba/Euphonium Conference in Saskatchewan. Current chamber and orchestral commissions take him through the year 2002, including: Symphonic Poem No. 1: Release for the Hopkins Symphony Orchestra and Bay-Atlantic Symphony Orchestra, based on the platinum photography of Elizabeth Siegfried; a work for saxophone quartet and orchestra, for the Capitol Quartet; and a large-scale work for chorus and orchestra for the Choral Arts Society of Washington. Grant lives and works in Rehoboth Beach, Delaware. James Grant's published music and recordings are available exclusively online, at JamesGrantMusic.com.

As its name suggests, **LAMENT** for string orchestra is not a lighthearted work. It is, rather, a meditation on the myriad emotional and spiritual challenges which daily confront us all. An opening lamentation gently beseeches, gives way to rising passions and swells into full and compelling grief. As the mood clears, a slim sense of hope surfaces, hovers tentatively, then transcends into the sublime. Once more, the spirit gathers strength and begins its journey towards renewal. **LAMENT** was commissioned and first performed by the New Orchestra of Boston under the direction of David Epstein, Music Director. (*Notes by the composer*)